1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

completely exhausted or reduced to a mere trickle. The average annual rainfall over the last ten years is 29·75 in. The shore waters of Lake Pamolombe are well stocked with fish. Both districts are well wooded, with a large variety of timber trees. In the dry sandy soil where the population is unable to live for lack of water, the prevalent type is *tsanya*. A line of foothills from Zomba to Chikala are conserved as Forest Reserves.[1]

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY[2]

The Yao are chiefly agriculturists, and in the old days were also hunters. As they live largely in tsetse-infested areas, they do not keep cattle, except for a few herds near Fort Johnston and Zomba, in Nyasaland, and on the east of Lake Nyasa,[3] in the mountains of the Ruvuma valley around Mataka's.[4]

Abdullah describes a time when the Yao were economically self-sufficient, making their own bark-cloth, weaving, burning herbs for salt, and working iron for the tools they needed. Nevertheless, the tradition of coastward journeys for trading with the Arabs was well developed before the Europeans came to the country. They used to trade cattle and salt from the Manganja and Lomwe for tobacco and hoes, and in exchange for slaves they got from the Arabs gunpowder, guns, swords, beads, coloured cloths, earthenware, and foodstuffs.[5] Slaving expeditions were among the most important activities of the chiefs.[6] The old tradition of the absence of the men from the village owing to these expeditions, is continued in modern times by soldiers and labour migrants to Southern Rhodesia and the Union. These men send back remittances to the area, but the main population is supported by agriculture. Cash is needed for purchasing salt and cloth, for paying certain dues and fines formerly paid in kind—adultery compensation, diviner's and initiation fees—as well as for tax and rent. Consequently, while certain crops, such as tobacco and ground-nuts, are grown for cash, any food crop is liable to be sold in one form or another in local markets or by the roadside.

The food crops are maize, sorghum, finger millet, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts, legumes. Fish is an important article of diet. Eggs are believed to cause sterility and are only eaten by those outside the child-propagating age; milk is disliked and never consumed.[7] *Termite alates* (flying ants) are a much relished food when they come out on nuptial flights. Rice is considered a superior food, and is eaten when possible on ritual occasions.[8]

Tobacco is the main cash crop, with individual production under the supervision of the Agricultural Department. The average cash earned per grower in 1943–4 was £5. 3*s*. This is overwhelmingly an external trade. Ground-nuts, which are sold at government-controlled markets to licensed buyers, bring in only a few shillings a year to the average seller. Women obtain cash by selling beer. At the lake shore the fishing industry is very important. Natives owning big nets are said to make between £20

[1] Murray, 1932, pp. 147–61.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, the information is from J. C. Mitchell, and relates to the Yao of south Nyasaland.

[3] Young, E., 1877, p. 102.

[4] Livingstone, 1874, pp. 72 and 80.

[5] Abdullah, 1919, pp. 10–11, 26–30.

[6] See Livingstone, 1874, p. 68; Young, E., 1877, p. 139; Thompson, 1882, p. 78; Sclater, 1893, p. 422; Maugham, 2, 1929, pp. 86–7; Laws, 1934, pp. 35–7.

[7] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 34.

[8] Barker, 1934, p. 14.

3: Stanmus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

137 278 *anjilu* is a more deadly poison and is not used in the poison ordeal but is administered with intent to murder; it is usually given mixed with beer or in porridge. Death is said to be assured in a few hours. *Lipembele:* the Yao name of beetles belonging to the genus *Mylabris*, found in large numbers in June and July in the native gardens where they do much damage to the bean crops. The name is, I think, more especially applied to a species with yellow bands, those with red markings being said to be harmless. These beetles are prepared for poisoning food by frying and then grinding into a powder. In this form, they are administered with intent to murder or they may be taken for suicidal purposes, five or six beetles being used. These beetles contain cantharidin in a greater proportion than cantharis itself. The symptoms described by the natives as occurring after exhibition are constipation followed by high fever, and death eight hours later. This same beetle is known to other tribes and is the *soonse* of the Anyanja.

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The bile of the crocodile, *nyongo* (*ndulu*, Chin.); *nyongo* and *ndulu* also are used, meaning the gall-bladder. Crocodile gall has the reputation of being a powerful poison over nearly the length and breadth of Africa. It is known, I think, to all the tribes in Nyasaland. In this district, they qualify their beliefs by saying that the bile of crocodiles from Lakes Chilwa and Chiuta which do not eat men is not poisonous. The poison is also said not to be used on the Lower Shiré River where, and where only, crocodiles are eaten as food by the natives. Among the Yao, the gall-bladder is removed with the contained gall, dried, and then ground in a little mortar or on a stone. The dose of the powder is said to be as much as would cover a sixpence. Symptoms are said to be great pain in the stomach, swelling and discoloration of the tongue, and loss of speech. Public destruction of the gall-bladder of any crocodile which has been killed is said to be the custom on the West Coast of Africa, and the same is true of some tribes in Nyasaland as at Kotakota, but so far as I am aware, this is not done among the Yao.

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The gall of other animals is similarly used, but among the Yao I am not quite certain of the species. *Lipiri*, the puff-adder, certainly is utilised, and I think other snakes, such as *Nalukuluti*, a grey, ash colored snake, *Liwyi*, a water-snake six feet long, and *Songo*, the crowing-snake. Certain lizards are also employed, such as *Likwakwala*, and frogs, both *Chiula* and the running frog, *Chisesenene*. Scorpions too have found a place among poisonous preparations, so it is said, and likewise, the bile of some mammals. Bamboo fibre, animal hair, the bones of fish, and ground glass, I have also heard mentioned as being administered with the desire to produce a fatal enteritis.

Pupal cases made of twigs and the contained pupa (species of the family of *Psychidae*) called *chitsanganu* or *chitsanu nguvi* (from *ku-tema*, "to cut" and *nguvi*, "fire-wood") are said when eaten by cattle to cause death. I cannot vouch for the truth of this nor can I say whether they are ever given to man.

137 278 A wild yam, *ndulu* (*malapa*, Chin.) is poisonous if not well boiled and the water thrown away, but is not used as a poison so far as I know. The same is true of *nyongo*, a kind of cassava.